



Massachusetts Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Team: Using data on pregnancy-related deaths to inform prevention recommendations

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Supervisor & Mentor: Mahsa Yazdy, PhD, MPH, Director, Division for Family Health Data and Analysis
Sarah L Stone, PhD, MPH, Division for Family Health Data and Analysis

Location: 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA/Remote

Background: The MDPH Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Team (MMMRT) works to identify all pregnancy-associated deaths (death of a person while pregnant or within one year of the end of pregnancy) in Massachusetts; collects information from a variety of data sources to summarize the events leading up to the death; convenes a multidisciplinary review committee (the Massachusetts Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee, MMMRC) to determine if the death was related to pregnancy and make recommendations to prevent future deaths; and summarizes findings from MMMRC reviews to inform clinical and community-based prevention interventions.

Fellowship Description: As an integral member of the MMMRT, the HSPH MCH Leadership Lab Fellow will provide valuable support by increasing the team's capacity to identify, gather information on, and review pregnancy-associated deaths and make actionable recommendations for preventing these tragic events. This will include continuous quality improvement activities to improve the efficiency, standardization, and timeliness of reviews of maternal deaths and assist in efforts to translate MMMRC recommendations into clinical, community-level and policy interventions.

Specific activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Collect data on pregnancy-associated deaths: assist MMMRT staff in requesting, obtaining and compiling all available information about pregnancy-associated deaths from a variety of data sources (medical records, autopsy reports, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, police records, social media, and other relevant sources.).
- Develop standard operating procedures (SOP): work with members of the MMMRT to develop SOPs to standardize and document the steps in various critical MMMRT activities. This would include developing and documenting a standardized process to investigate death certificates with pregnancy indicated via a pregnancy checkbox to assess whether cases are truly pregnancy-associated deaths.
- Develop data briefs, infographics and presentations: work with the MMMRT epidemiologist and other team members to develop data products summarizing MMMRC findings and recommendations for various audiences.

Key skill or topic areas:

- Data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting for various audiences
- Quality improvement

Additional Qualifications:

- Flexible, enthusiastic, self-motivated
- Ability to work well in a team setting

- Well-organized
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Committed to MDPH's mission of promoting and improving health for all, with a focus on eliminating racial disparities

Timeframe: September 2025-May 2026

Supervision:

The MCH Fellow will be supervised by:

- Mahsa Yazdy, PhD, MPH, Director, Division for Family Health Data and Analytics
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- Sarah L Stone, PhD, MPH, Division for Family Health Data and Analysis
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Maternal and Child Health Data Briefs

Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Supervisor & Mentor: Sarah L Stone, PhD, MPH, Director of Data Integration and Translation,
Division for Family Health Data and Analysis (DFHDA)

Xiaohui Geng, PRAMS Coordinator, DFHDA

Location: 250 Washington Street, 5th Floor, Boston MA 02108

Background: The Division for Family Health Data and Analysis (DFHDA) envisions a Commonwealth where all pregnant people and families are supported toward the best possible health outcomes. To this end, the Division gathers, analyzes, and interprets maternal and child health data to inform policy and programs and prepares tomorrow's researchers to carry the Division's work forward.

Within DMCHRA, one of our projects is the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). PRAMS is a population based-surveillance system designated to identify and monitor selected maternal experiences and behaviors that occur before, during, and after pregnancy as well as the child's early infancy experience. PRAMS data collection began in June 2007.

Fellowship Description: The student will work with our DFHDA staff to create fact sheets and data briefs using PRAMS data on topics including maternal and paternal mental health, social supports, social determinants of health and infant outcomes, prenatal care components, and barriers to healthcare. Other possible topics for fact sheets include but are not limited to prenatal substance use (e.g., smoking, e-smoking, alcohol, marijuana), interpersonal/intimate partner violence, factors associated with preterm birth, breastfeeding and hospital support, Family Medical Leave (maternity leave), and home visiting services. Fact sheets and data briefs will be posted on our division's website at Mass.gov and shared with our clinical and community partners. The student will gain an understanding of many factors that contribute to maternal, paternal, and child health (MCH) during pregnancy and postpartum, and of how to analyze population-based survey data.

Specific activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Review literature based on topic of fact sheet/data brief to understand the health landscape
- Review existing analyses
- Conduct analyses in SAS that can accommodate complex weighting of the survey sampling
- Summarize and interpret the findings of analyses
- Draft fact sheets/data briefs
- Support development of dissemination plans for deliverables

Key skill or topic areas:

- SAS analysis, survey data analysis
- health data communications, data visualization

Additional Qualifications:

- Intermediate SAS skills highly desired
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Flexible, self-motivated

- Well-organized
- Ability to work well in a team setting
- Some knowledge of data visualization helpful
- Some knowledge of Maternal and Child Health helpful.

Timeframe: September 2025-May 2026

Supervision:

The MCH Fellow will be supervised by:

- Sarah L. Stone, Director, Data Integration and Translation, Division for Family Health Data and Analytics (DFHDA) sarah.l.stone@mass.gov
- Xiaohui Geng, PRAMS Coordinator, DMCHRA, Xiaohui.Geng@mass.gov